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RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2504  
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S E C R E T TASHKENT 000623

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ETRD, EINV, SOCI, SNAR, AF, UZ  
SUBJECT: BOUCHER AND SENIOR UZBEKS REVIEW OBSTACLES AND  
OPPORTUNITIES

REF: A. TASHKENT 446 B. TASHKENT 482 C. TASHKENT 445

Classified By: Poloffs Steven Prohaska and Robert  
McCutcheon for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Richard Boucher visited Uzbekistan May 30-June 3, stopping in Samarkand and Tashkent. In separate meetings June 2 with Uzbek Foreign Minister Norov and National Security Council Secretary Ataev, Assistant Secretary Boucher discussed Afghanistan, regional economic integration, security and law enforcement cooperation, educational exchanges, and human rights. The Uzbeks underscored their frustrations with Karzai, distanced themselves from Dostum, promised an electricity line to Afghanistan, and expressed interest in security cooperation and renewing educational exchanges. They argued that their efforts on human rights have been significant, that progress takes time, and that U.S. sanctions would damage relations. While accepting Boucher's argument that none of us wants a repeat of Andijon, Norov rejected any further formal discussions. On human rights, Boucher pressed for release of political prisoners, ending torture, implementing habeas corpus, and working with non-governmental organizations. End summary.

Afghanistan: on Karzai, "6 plus 3," and transport corridors  
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¶2. (C) In response to Boucher identifying Afghanistan as a key area of cooperation, the Uzbeks underscored their frustration with Afghan President Karzai, saying that he has failed to stem corruption or fight the narcotics trade. He has not established control in the provinces, they said, and continuing economic woes threaten to strengthen the Taliban. Both Norov and Ataev underlined Uzbekistan's continued support for NATO goals in Afghanistan, though again they noted their belief that our methods are failing. The Uzbeks raised President Karimov's proposed "6 plus 3" Afghan coordination mechanism. They noted their opposition to Russian and Chinese efforts to use the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Collective Security Treaty

Organization (CSTO) in Afghan reconstruction efforts.

¶3. (C) Assistant Secretary Boucher explained that the Taliban having failed in last year's offensive had resorted to terrorist tactics. He emphasized NATO's increased focus this year on strengthening Afghanistan's district and provincial governments. Boucher addressed the Uzbek "6 plus 3" proposal, noting that while enhancing cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbors is important, "6 plus 3" is not the right mechanism now that Afghanistan has its own government. Ataev seemed to understand, while Norov seemed less willing to abandon the idea, which is championed by Uzbek President Karimov. Boucher confirmed the importance we attach to Uzbek cooperation on Afghan supply corridors for the coalition and noted the upcoming June 25-26 visit of Commander TRANSCOM, General Schwartz.

Uzbeks committed to providing electricity to Afghanistan  
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¶4. (C) Boucher urged the Uzbeks to finalize agreement, ideally before the June 12 Paris conference, with the Afghans on construction of upgraded electrical transmission lines. The Uzbeks responded that "the ball was in the Afghan court." Ataev noted that while agreement before June 12 was unlikely, Deputy Prime Minister Ergash Shaismatov had nonetheless ordered construction to commence on the Uzbek side of the border. (Comment: The negotiations continue, slowly, and the Afghan Ambassador to Tashkent tells us that an Uzbek technical team is expected next week in Afghanistan. End comment.)

Views of Dostum  
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¶5. (S) Boucher told Ataev that President Karzai had decided to arrest ethnic Uzbek factional leader General Dostum. The general had become part of the problem, Boucher said, and he needed to understand that it was time for him to go. Ataev maintained that the Uzbeks, "like the Turks," had ended their support for Dostum and that since 2001 the general had visited Uzbekistan only once - in transit. Ataev claimed the Uzbek government has no influence over Dostum but found his behavior unacceptable.

Economic integration  
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¶6. (C) Both Norov and Ataev called for greater investment in Uzbekistan. Both noted Uzbek commitment to meeting foreign investors, expectations and cited as evidence the attendance of Minister for Foreign Economic Relations Elyor Ganiev in May, at the Washington meeting of the American-Uzbek Chamber of Commerce. Boucher agreed that investment was critical to Uzbekistan and urged the Uzbeks to send high-level representation to Dushanbe for the June 17-18 Central Asian Trade and Investment Framework Agreement meetings. Boucher urged the Uzbeks to integrate regionally and to promote the rule of law in business matters. This, he suggested, could encourage more companies to follow the example of General Motors, which last year purchased a stake in a major Uzbek auto manufacturer.

Security Cooperation  
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¶7. (C) The Uzbeks were positive on a broad range of security cooperation, border security and law enforcement programs. Assistant Secretary Boucher noted that the Cooperative Threat Reduction umbrella agreement, which deals with facilitating the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), will expire June 5. He suggested that the agreement be signed on June 4, along with a separate protocol regarding unresolved implementation issues. Ataev said that Uzbekistan is ready to sign a Modalities and Information-Sharing proposal for border security and law enforcement cooperation "as soon as possible." (Comment: The Embassy submitted this proposal in December 2007. It is intended to provide

protection to local Embassy staff engaged in relevant programs and is important to our resuming a number of law enforcement and border security assistance programs. End comment.) Ataev noted lastly that he is grateful for the level of military-technical cooperation between the Department of Defense and the Ministry of Defense, and that Uzbekistan tries to participate in all exercises and training opportunities that the U.S. offers. Boucher flagged counter-narcotics and counter-proliferation as additional areas in which we would like to cooperate. He noted in particular our anticipated reopening of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration office in Tashkent.

#### Educational Exchanges

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¶8. (C) Both Ataev and Norov agreed in principle that educational exchanges should be renewed. Exchanges, they said, help to instill democratic principles in young people. Boucher pointed out that the U.S. has continued to experience difficulties renewing exchange programs in Uzbekistan. He also noted that the lack of our usual non-governmental organization partners - many of whom were expelled in 2005 and 2006 - hindered our efforts. He suggested experts convene to work this out. Ataev proposed that Uzbekistan's governmentally-controlled National Association of Non-Governmental Organizations be involved in the process and participate in the allocation of grants and scholarships. Boucher agreed that our Embassy would look at this with Uzbek counterparts (note: in the past, the Uzbeks have tried to take control of the grantee selection process, so we will approach this carefully). Boucher also raised the Uzbek refusal to allow Arizona State University to implement a summer 2008 program in Bukhara.

#### Human rights and sanctions

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¶9. (C) Boucher acknowledged that the Uzbeks have taken some positive steps toward observance of human rights, including the introduction of a "habeas corpus" law, renewed cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the release of six political prisoners. The most important step now, said Boucher, is for the Uzbeks to turn good words into better deeds. He urged reconsideration of a May decision to refuse registration of the new Human Rights Watch representative in Tashkent. Boucher stressed the importance of human rights to the U.S. government and public. "Our goal is not to embarrass or criticize the government, but to work constructively to improve the lives of people," he said. He also raised the desire of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to train police and military units to deal with events such as Andijon.

¶10. (C) Both Norov and Ataev argued that human rights reform takes time. Both men pointed to efforts within the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior, and the Office of the Prosecutor General - and to what they described as a positive trend over the years. Norov (a police officer for 15 years) declared that Uzbekistan does not want to return to the past and pointed to Singapore and Malaysia as possible examples for Uzbekistan as it finds its own path. He emphasized that U.S. sanctions would harm relations.

¶11. (C) On Andijon, Norov said that the Uzbek government has been completely open now with the Europeans and the U.S. "We have hidden nothing," he said, referring to two European Union visits and recent transfers of information to the U.S. Embassy. He added that Uzbek citizens who ended up in the U.S. after Andijon are now returning home. "We don't want to discuss this any further," he concluded. Boucher said that the U.S. and Uzbekistan share a fundamental interest in avoiding a repeat of the 2005 events and needed to talk about this. Norov did talk more about Andijon at a dinner June 2; he repeated the Uzbek line that security forces were merely responding to armed provocations, but he seemed to accept A/S Boucher's point that more dialogue would be useful in ensuring

that such actions never happen again.

¶12. (C) Norov claimed on several occasions that, compared to their neighbors, they have been subjected to a double standard. Norov claimed that Human Rights Watch has offices in only two former Soviet countries: Russia and Uzbekistan. He complained that Human Rights Watch continues to send representatives who do not understand Central Asia and who spread incorrect information. Boucher said he hoped Uzbekistan would "embrace non-governmental organizations" as partners. Saying he was worried that no Human Rights Watch nominee would be acceptable to the Uzbek government, he asked that the Uzbeks reconsider.

Samarkand governor and Islamic education  
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¶13. (C) Assistant Secretary Boucher met May 31 with newly appointed Samarkand Hokim (Governor) Uktam Isaeivich Barnoev and toured historical sites. He expressed interest in how Uzbekistan combines Islamic and secular education, which prompted President Karimov, upon hearing this, to organize a June 2 visit by Boucher to the Tashkent Islamic University. A/S Boucher answered questions posed in English by students. He held a short press conference, after his meeting June 2 with President Karimov.

¶14. (U) Assistant Secretary Boucher has cleared this message.

NORLAND